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Mary or Kate Layman

Frontispiece.—Red Shoes.

"Mother, did you ever see anything so pretty as my red shoes?" p. 10.

THE

CHILDREN

OF

BLACKBERRY HOLLOW.

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THE RED SHOES.

THE RED SHOES.

CHAPTER I.

FAR away on a green hill-side, a little calf played and frisked and threw up its heels. Now, the calf's mother was really a very sedate and sensible old cow; yet she never (that anybody could see) made the least attempt to teach the little calf to look as grave as herself, or to walk as slow, or to lie down and be quiet as many times in the day. He would not even stand and meditate, with his feet in the brook. Perhaps she thought that he could learn it all quick enough, when the time came; and so doubtless he might. But when the time

came—that is, not that time, but another, —the calf was taken to the butcher to be killed, and then his skin was stripped off and carried to the tanner's. There every bit of the hair was scraped away, and the skin was put into the tan-pits, to make it fit for shoes. In the tan-pit there was water, and bark from an oak-tree; and when the calf's skin had lain there some time it became soft and thick, and was called leather; and when it was tanned enough, it was taken out and dyed a beautiful red colour. Then the shoemaker bought it. There were many other pieces of leather in his shop,—black, and blue, and green, and even yellow; and there was some very thick leather to make the soles of the shoes.

One day the shoemaker took down the piece of red leather, and with a sharp knife cut out a little pair of shoes; and he cut

some thicker leather for the soles, and some white stuff for the lining; and then they were sewed and fitted on a last. The last was a little wooden block, shaped something like a foot. Then somebody bound the shoes with red ribbon, and put in red strings, and then they were wrapped up in paper and sent home.

Now, when the boy who carried the little bundle knocked at Mrs. Delaine's door, Debby herself opened it.

"Here's something for you, I guess," said the boy; and he put the shoes into Debby's hand, and ran off. Debby walked straight into the room where her mother was.

"Mother," she said, "here's my red shoes! May I put 'em right on?"

"If you choose," said her mother.

Then Debby sat down on her little bench and pulled off her black shoes in a

great hurry, and flung them aside just as if she had not been very proud of them once,—which indeed she had. But her mother said not a word, and Debby never knew how she looked; for as soon as the red shoes were on she could see nothing but them. There she sat, with her feet stuck out into the sunshine, till you would almost think nobody had ever had feet before,—much less red shoes.

"Mother," said Debby, "did you ever *see* any thing so pretty as my red shoes?"

"Well, Debby," said her mother, "you know I have some queer notions about pretty things. Now, shoes never look pretty to me unless they walk well."

"But, mother," said Debby, "how can shoes walk?"

"Oh, only when the feet that are in them walk," said her mother.

"Oh, yes, to be sure," said Debby. "Well, how do feet walk well?"

"Why, when they are in a good path and going at a good rate," said her mother.

"Well, what is a good path?" said Debby.

"It is a path which leads to good things."

"What path are my shoes in now?" said Debby, looking at them affectionately.

"In a path that leads to vanity, I should think," said her mother, "and going at a very good rate, too." Debby drew her feet in under her frock in quick time.

"Mother," she said, "you're so funny!"

"Am I?" said her mother, smiling. "But isn't it true?"

"Well," said Debby, "I suppose, perhaps, it is!"

"It is what lies at the end of a path that makes it really bad or good," said her

mother. "A path may be very smooth and flowery, and yet lead to a precipice; or it may be very rough, and lead to a good happy home. So the people that choose a path or a way of life merely because they like the looks of it, may sometimes make a great mistake."

"But how *can* they choose, then?" said Debby. "For I am sure they cannot see away, away to the end."

"Not always," said her mother. "But they can always ask God to lead them, for he sees the end from the beginning, and if they want very much to go only towards heaven, they will soon learn the way. If you were far, far away from home, Debby, and longing to get there, you would be very careful not to take a single little step that even seemed like going astray."

"Yes, indeed, I should," said Debby.

"And if I said to you, 'Debby, every

step on the dry ground will bring you towards home, and every step on the wet ground will take you farther off,'—how would you walk?"

"Why, I'd go on the dry ground, to be sure, and never go near the wet."

"Then suppose the dry ground was rough and steep, while down in the wet there were beautiful-looking flowers,—red and yellow and blue: then may-be you would think, 'I dare say there's some dry ground down there,—enough to walk upon if I'm careful to pick my way.' And then you would try, and go stepping along; and first your shoes would be a little damp, and then down would go one foot in the mud!"

"I know how it would be," said Debby; "because I did just that way coming home one night. But I had old shoes on."

"Ah! there is one use of new shoes,'

said her mother, smiling: "they are apt to make people careful. But if we are travelling home with eager hearts, whether with shoes or no shoes, with red slippers or only clean little feet, we shall not want to get in the mud and so be belated and weary and ashamed.

"'Who are they whose little feet,
Pacing life's dark journey through,
Now have reach'd that heavenly seat
They had ever kept in view?

* * * * *

Each the welcome "Come!" awaits,
Conquerors over death and sin:
Lift your heads, ye golden gates!
Let the little travellers in!'

"That is the sort of little feet I love, Debby,—the only ones that are really beautiful; and whether they wear red shoes or no shoes, does not make much difference. You may learn the whole

hymn, if you like." So Debby sat down to learn.

"CHILDREN AT THE GATE OF HEAVEN."

"Little travellers Zionward,
Each one entering into rest,
In the kingdom of your Lord,
In the mansions of the blest;
There, to welcome, Jesus waits,
Gives the crowns his followers win:
Lift your heads, ye golden gates!
Let the little travellers in!

"Who are they whose little feet,
Pacing life's dark journey through,
Now have reach'd that heavenly seat
They had ever kept in view?
'I from Greenland's frozen land;'
'I from India's sultry plain;'
'I from Afric's barren sand;'
'I from islands of the main!'

"All our earthly journey past,
Every tear and pain gone by,
Here together met at last,
At the portal of the sky,
Each the welcome 'COME!' awaits,
Conquerors over death and sin:
Lift your heads, ye golden gates!
Let the little travellers in!"

CHAPTER II.

"MOTHER," said Debby, "what does Zionward mean?"

"Sometimes," said her mother, "Zion is one of the names of Jerusalem, in the Bible; and sometimes it is used as a name for all of God's own people: as when the Psalmist says, 'The Lord shall reign forever; even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations!' But here in the hymn, Debby, and in many places in the Bible, Zion is but another word for the heavenly Jerusalem. 'The redeemed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.'"

"And Zionward means towards Zion," said Debby. "I know that."

"Yes," said her mother: "these little travellers have heard that the Lord hath founded Zion, and so they have chosen it for their home. Every day they are travelling on towards it, and there Jesus has a crown for each one of them."

"I guess they walk well, then," said Debby, "since they're going to such a good place."

"One who is really travelling towards Zion, with his face thitherwards, Debby," said her mother, "walks as no one else can! In the first place, he walks in safety; for 'the Lord keepeth the feet of his saints.' If they trust in him, 'their feet shall not slip.' Sin shall neither conquer nor mislead them."

"Don't they ever want to do wrong?" said Debby.

"Sin may tempt them sometimes," said her mother; "but if they pray,—'Teach

me thy way, O Lord; lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies,'—then the Lord will answer them, 'This is the way: walk ye in it.' None of the attacks of sin shall hurt them; for the Lord is a buckler to them that walk uprightly."

"And what then?" said Debby.

"Why, then," said her mother, "they walk in the way of peace and in the light of God's countenance."

"And that makes them shine," said Debby. "I remember all about my little stone."

"Yes, that makes them shine," said her mother. "And so, with this glory about them and in their hearts, they walk in the fear of the Lord, and in love towards them that are without, redeeming the time. For any one who is travelling towards Zion 'with a perfect heart' wants to do

every bit of work the Lord has given him to do, on the way."

"Then they always mind, I guess," said Debby.

"Ah, Debby," said her mother, "they do a great deal more than that!—they are *eager* to mind. 'I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments,' said King David. Now, you know all minding is not like that."

"No, indeed," said Debby, thinking how slowly she had gone up-stairs that very morning on some errand for her mother.

"No, indeed," her mother repeated. "Now the Bible says that the feet of the wicked run to evil; but the righteous 'run the way of God's commandments.' Walking is not enough for them: they must run. When there is any work to be done for the Lord, they say, 'Here am I: send me.'"

"I guess they feel good always, then," said Debby.

"They feel happy,—if that is what you mean," said her mother. "No matter what troubles or difficulties they have to go through, 'the word of the Lord is a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path.' Men may ill-treat them and throw them into prison; yet shall they 'walk at liberty, for they seek his precepts.' 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me.' Walking with God, none need be afraid."

"What more do they do?" said Debby.

"They always walk in truth, for one thing," said her mother. "And then, Debby, they try to do good to other people, and to bring them out of the ways of darkness. Oh, what walking that is! 'How beautiful upon the mountains are

the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation!'"

"The good tidings," said Debby: "that's the news that Jesus came to save people. Because when he was born the angels called it good tidings of great joy."

"Yes: you remember very well," said her mother. "Now, the Bible says that every one that abideth in Jesus ought himself also so to walk even as he walked. How was that?"

"He went about doing good," said Debby. "I learned that."

"Yes; and it was his meat and drink to do the will of God. And when we walk like him, Debby, then are our 'feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;' and there is no shoe like that for going over all rough places."

"And do all the little travellers Zionward walk so?" said Debby.

"Ah," said her mother, "they are all trying to walk so; for every one who follows Jesus will try to walk worthy of the Lord, unto all well-pleasing.' When you tried to cross the brook once on a log, Debby, how did you contrive to do it?"

"Why, you told me not to look about, mother," said Debby; "and so I just looked at you and walked straight across. And I held out my hand, you know, and you took hold of it."

"Well," said her mother, "in walking through this world, Debby, unless you want to make crooked paths for your feet, you must not look hither and thither to see how other people do, or to show what a steady head you have. Look only to Jesus; hold out your hand to him: then you will be a traveller Zionward."

"And they go to the kingdom of the Lord, and the mansions of the blest," said Debby.

"Yes," said her mother. "And where are those mansions?"

"Oh, I know," said Debby: "it's in that chapter where I learned my verses last Sunday, where the Lord Jesus says, 'In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you.'"

"Now listen," said her mother, "and I will read you a little bit about that, Debby. It tells of Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem:—

"'And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it.'

"First they walk with God on earth, and then in the full light of his counte nance in heaven."

CHAPTER III.

THE Sunday-school children at the village were going to have a strawberry feast over on Church Hill: there was nice green grass there, and great trees to give shade. And the children were to meet just where the brook runs out of the Hollow, and then walk together to the Hill. So, when it drew near four o'clock, Debby set out to walk to the place of meeting, red shoes and all. I really think that black ones would have looked better, for such a walk; but Debby wished very much to wear the red; and her mother consented. They made quite a show in the green grass as she went along, Debby thought; and she was so busy watching

for them, as one after the other stepped forward, that she actually forgot all about the strawberry feast till she came in sight of the rest of the children. There was Sarah Dasher, and the Singletons, and Tom Lane, and many others,—some of the poor village children, too, and all the teachers.

When all had arrived, the teachers began to arrange them two-and-two, that they might walk in nice order. First went Ellen Singleton and Sarah Dasher, and then the two next oldest; and so on. Now, Debby hoped very much that she might have one of her particular friends to walk with; but, instead of that, Mrs. Singleton brought up one of the village children for her companion.

"This is Jane King, Debby," she said. "I want you to walk with her."

So Debby and Jane King walked off after the other children, and Debby held

her head down and peeped at Jane round the edge of her sunbonnet. She was a nice-looking child, with good, plump cheeks and brown hair, and quiet, pleasant little face. But she was a poor child: that was plain. Her dress was clean, but very old and faded and patched up, and she had no shoes at all! To be sure, her bare feet were as clean as if they had just come out of the brook. Debby looked at them. They went sturdily plodding on through the grass, with Debby's red shoes twinkling about alongside of them.

"How queer it is!" thought Debby. "What could make her come to a festival with no shoes?" Then, as they walked on, suddenly Debby began to think of something else:—

"Who are they whose little feet,
Pacing life's dark journey through,
Now have reach'd that heavenly seat
They had ever kept in view?"

"Red shoes or no shoes, it doesn't make much difference," Debby repeated to herself, thinking of her mother's words. And yet it seemed to make a good deal, too.

"I wonder which way she's walking?" thought Debby again. "I guess I'll ask her. Jane, do you know how to walk well?"

"I don't know—I think I don't know—what you mean," Jane answered, colouring. For she had been watching Debby's red shoes, too, and thought that may-be Debby was laughing at her bare feet.

"Well, which way are you going, then?" said Debby.

"I'm going up to the festival," said Jane, quietly. "Mrs. Singleton told me to come."

"Is that all?" said Debby.

"Yes," said Jane, "that's all. I knew I might come if she told me to. I guess

they ve all got shoes but me;—but I couldn't help that. We're too poor to wear shoes in summer."

"Oh, but," said Debby, "my mother says it don't make much difference."

"I think it does make some," said Jane, looking down again at the little red shoes. "I think it makes a good deal."

"No, it don't," said Debby, "if you only walk well."

Jane looked at her own bare feet this time, plodding on as before, and wondered what in the world Debby meant.

"I can get along fast enough," she said, "but it a'n't so pretty to look at."

"Oh, but I don't mean that, at all," said Debby. "Why, didn't you ever hear about the little travellers?"

Jane looked up, and a smile came over her face.

"'Little Travellers Zionward?'" she

said. "Oh, yes, to be sure. I know all about that. I mean, I know something."

"But what makes you stop and take back your words so?" said Debby. "A little while ago you said, 'I don't know—I think I don't know;' and now, again."

"I spoke too fast," said Jane. "I spoke as if I was sure; and I wasn't. And just now I said I knew all about the little travellers; but, oh, I know so little! I spoke too fast to speak quite true."

Then thought Debby to herself, "I guess that's what mother meant by walking in the truth." "Well, what do you know about 'em, Jane?" she said aloud. "Because I know a good deal, and I can tell you."

"Do you?" said Jane, putting her hand in Debby's. "Then I wish you would tell me. You know, Debby, the Bible says we ought to walk even as Jesus walked;

and sometimes it seems to me as if I walked just the other way. Do you ever feel so? Now, if I loved Jesus as he loves me, I think my heart would run to him all the time."

Debby was puzzled in her turn. Here was something about little travellers which went quite beyond her knowledge.

"Do you love Jesus?" she said, looking out from under her sunbonnet.

"Oh, yes!" Jane answered: "we all do at home. We should be *dreadfully* poor if it wasn't for that."

"Would you?" said Debby, wondering.

"Oh, yes," said Jane: "we've got nothing else in the whole world."

"And you think he loves you?" said Debby.

"Why, I'm sure he does," said Jane. "He wouldn't have done so much for me if he didn't. That's what mother said yes-

terday, when Tim Ryan said *he* didn't believe any such thing. Mother said, 'Just read the Bible, and you'll *see* it, Tim.'"

"I guess you're a real little traveller, Jane," said Debby. But why Debby sighed as she said it, she herself did not know.

And now they had mounted the hill, and there, under the trees, was a long, white tent, and under the tent the feast was spread. How beautiful the tables looked!—covered first with white cloths, and then with ever so many nice things.

Of course, as it was a strawberry feast, there were more strawberries than any thing else,—some in dishes, and some in little baskets, and some in saucers, all ready to be eaten. Then there were dishes

of cherries, and plates of cake, and flowers everywhere in great abundance. There was ice-cream, too, in a great pail over in one corner. So that Debby said it was almost as good as a fair. The teachers stood near the tables, and took care that all the children were well helped; and it was pretty to see the little things sitting about on the grass, eating their strawberries. Then they all sat together under the trees and sang; and after that, when the sun was nearly down, they went home.

You would have been amused to see what a fancy Debby and Jane King took to each other.

The first thing Debby said when she got home was,—

"Oh, mother, I had a splendid time!

And who do you guess I walked with, up to Church Hill?"

"How can I possibly guess?" said her mother, smiling. "Was it Tom Lane?"

"Oh, no," said Debby, "it wasn't Tom; but it was somebody almost as good. It was a real little traveller, mother."

When Jane King got home, the first thing was to put her flowers in water; for Mrs. Singleton had given her a great bunch of roses and white lilies; and then Jane stood looking at them with much satisfaction. And no wonder; for they were the only pretty things in the room. Such a poor little room! though it was very clean; but with no carpet and no curtains, and only an old table and a stove and a few chairs.

"Did you have a nice time, child?" said her mother.

"Oh, a very nice time," said Jane;

"and here's some cake for you, mother And I walked with such a nice little girl in red shoes. They looked so pretty, mother, you can't think!"

Her mother looked down at Jane's little bare feet, and said nothing.

CHAPTER IV.

It was the next day after the strawberry feast, and Debby Delaine and her mother sat at work in the front porch. Debby thought she was at work; but indeed it was only an apron for her doll; and, as the doll was very patient and willing to wait, there was really no hurry about it. So Debby sewed a little, and then she laid down the apron and played with the cat. And presently puss began to bite Debby's shoes. Debby watched her. The black shoes were on to-day, or, you may be sure, Debby would have stopped the cat's sport quick enough.

"Mother," she said, suddenly, "I wish you would tell me more about the little

travellers. The next verse says, 'who are they?'"

"Take notice, first," said her mother, "that they who reach that heavenly seat have been journeying on towards it, keeping it in view all the time. They have not been turning their backs on the Celestial City, so that it should be a surprise and a new idea to find themselves there."

"What does 'facing' mean?" said Debby?"

"In this place it means going along, step by step. That is the way people follow Jesus towards heaven, Debby,—step by step. And sometimes the steps are very little ones; but they are all after him."

"The hymn says, 'their little feet,'" said Debby, looking down at her own small, black shoes, on which pussy had laid her white paws.

"Yes; their little feet," said her mother. "Oh, how many little feet are even now treading those heavenly courts! And how many more are on the way! And you see, Debby, they come from all parts of the world:—

'I from Greenland's frozen land;'
'I from India's sultry plain;'
'I from Afric's barren sand;'
'I from islands of the main.'"

"All these far-away places," said Debby.

"Yes," said her mother, "very far away from us, and from each other, but not from heaven. Heaven is near every part of the world to those who follow Jesus. And then, when their earthly journey is all past, the little travellers will all meet together at those heavenly gates."

"And the gates will let 'em come in," said Debby. "The hymn says so."

"Oh, yes," said her mother, "and the Bible says so too:—'Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.' And who will welcome them, Debby?"

"The Lord Jesus, first," said Debby.

'There, to welcome, Jesus waits,—
Gives the crowns his followers win.'"

"Then they will be welcomed and crowned by Jesus!" said Mrs. Delaine. "Will not that be a reward for a weary little traveller?"

"Will they be weary?" said Debby.

"Some of them will be weary," her mother answered. "Look at Jane King, Debby: don't you think she sometimes gets weary of going barefoot, and of having little to eat, and not much fire in the cold weather, and having to work hard?"

"I don't know," said Debby. "She didn't look so."

"Then, if all that does not trouble her," said Mrs. Delaine, "I can tell you what she does get weary of sometimes. Of not loving Jesus enough,—of being but a poor, unfaithful little traveller, after all."

"Oh, I guess that's true," said Debby. "She said something like that."

"And what does the last verse mean, when it says,—

'Each the welcome 'COME' awaits'?

What does the Bible tell about that?"

"I don't know, mother," said Debby.

"If you turn to the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew," said her mother, "you will find that it tells about a day when the Son of Man (that means the Lord Jesus, you know, Debby) shall come in his glory.

When he came to this world before, it was in poverty and humiliation; but the next time it shall be 'in his glory, and all the holy angels with him. Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations.'"

"That means people from all the different countries," said Debby. "I had that in my geography lesson."

"Yes," said her mother; "it means all the people from all the countries:—from Greenland, and India, and Africa, and all the rest. They shall be all gathered before him, 'and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.'

"Now, when men divide the nations, Debby, they do it partly by the colour of their faces:—the red skins by themselves, and the white, and the black, and

the copper-coloured. But how will the Lord Jesus divide them?"

"I don't know," said Debby.

"Think," said her mother. "What was that verse you learned last Sunday?"

"Oh, I know," said Debby:—"'The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance; but the Lord looketh on the heart.' Then he'll divide 'em by their hearts: won't he?"

"Yes," said her mother; "for, 'as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.' And the Lord will know what lives have been spent in loving service to him, and what have not.

"And then shall he, the King of kings and Lord of lords, say unto them on his right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' To those on his left hand he shall say,

'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' Think how those will feel to whom the Lord Jesus in that day shall say, 'Depart.'"

Debby did not answer, except by a little sob that came up in her throat and choked back the words.

"Do you think Debby Delaine will be among the little travellers to whom the King shall say 'Come?'" asked her mother, softly.

"I don't know," said Debby, struggling with her tears. "I think Jane will,—and Tom Lane."

"What makes you think so?" said her mother.

"They're so good," said Debby.

"What else does the hymn say of the little travellers?" said Mrs. Delaine. "Over what are they conquerors?"

"Over death and sin," said Debby.

"Then they were not good to begin with?"

"No," said Debby: "I s'pose not."

"No," her mother repeated: "they were not good to begin with. Sin struggled in their hearts and tried to keep them from following Jesus. Then how did they conquer sin?"

"I don't know, mother," said Debby.

Then Mrs. Delaine took the Bible and showed Debby these words:—

"'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

"'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.'"

"That is the way, Debby," her mother went on: "it is only through Jesus,—

through the power of his blood to wash away their sin,—through the power of his grace to keep them day by day. The best person in the whole world has need to pray all his life, 'Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.'"

"Then walking well is just following Jesus," said Debby.

"Just that," said her mother.

Debby sat still, and thought again.

"Mother," she said, "don't you think my red shoes might learn to run about and do some good to people?"

"I have no doubt of it," said her mother.

"I don't think it as easy to follow Jesus in 'em as it is in my black ones, though," said Debby; "because I get to thinking about 'em, and I forget all about where I'm going. But I mean to try."

And after that, whenever Debby wore

the red shoes, she used to repeat to herself,—

"Red shoes or no shoes,—it doesn't make much difference. Following Jesus is the thing."

THE END.

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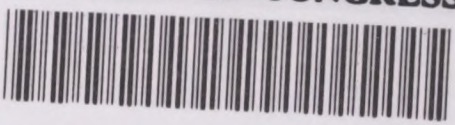

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